

VZCZCXYZ1705
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHMU #0263/01 0652310
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 052310Z MAR 08
FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2181
INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUMIAAA/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY
RUEABND/DEA HQS WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 000263

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/CEN, INL/LP
INL FOR AMARTIN
NSC FOR FISK/ALVARADO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/11/2013
TAGS: [SNAR](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [NU](#)
SUBJECT: ORTEGA TIGHTENS GRIP ON NICARAGUAN NATIONAL POLICE
AND ARMY

Classified By: Ambassador Paul Trivelli, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: On February 27, Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega stated his intention to bypass the Nicaraguan Ministry of Government and the Ministry of Defense by assuming direct control of the Nicaraguan National Police (NNP) and the Nicaraguan Army, "without any intermediary." Ortega's statement was widely criticized by the Nicaraguan media, political analysts, and the National Assembly, with National Assembly Defense and Government Committee Chairman Enrique Quinonez publicly observing that the proposed change fit in perfectly with Ortega's "dictatorial spirit." On March 3, Ortega apparently utilized this new chain-of-command structure to personally order the dismissal of five senior NNP officials. Regarding the dismissals, National Assembly Justice Committee Chairman Jose Pallais expressed his concern that Ortega's "politically motivated" decisions would damage the independence and professionalism of the NNP. End Summary.

- - - - -
The Buck Stops With Ortega Alone
- - - - -

12. (C) During a February 27 ceremony marking the presentation of the NNP's annual "State of Operations" report to the office of the President, Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega declared his intent to, "assume the direct command of the Army and the Police without any intermediary, with (Nicaraguan Army) General (Omar) Halleslevens and Police Chief Aminta Granera." Ortega justified the move as "necessary" to deal with a world in which "crime and violence multiply by the day." Ortega's statement was widely criticized by the Nicaraguan media, political analysts, and the National Assembly, with National Assembly Defense and Government Committee Chairman Enrique Quinonez publicly observing that the proposed change fit in perfectly with Ortega's "dictatorial spirit." Political analyst and Nicaraguan constitutional specialist Alejandro Serrano Caldera opined that although the President clearly has the constitutional power to directly control the Nicaraguan Army, the proposed take-over of the NNP was illegal under Article 97 of the Nicaraguan Constitution, which specifies that the President should exercise control over the NNP only through the "proper corresponding Ministry."

Cleaning House & Flexing New Muscles

13. (C) Following this announcement, on March 3 Nicaraguan media widely reported Ortega's direct dismissal of five senior NNP officials. The officials are as follows: NNP Public Relations Chief Alonso Sevilla, Chontales District Chief Jose Roman Orozco, Judicial Auxiliary Chief Denis Tinoco Zeledon, Finance Division Chief Rosalpina Cabrales, and Juvenile Affairs Chief Hamyn Gurdian. Nicaraguan newspaper La Prensa noted that all of the senior officials were well-respected and considered close allies of NNP Chief Aminta Granera, and speculated that political considerations were foremost in Ortega's decision to dismiss the five officials. Regarding the dismissals, National Assembly Justice Committee Chairman Jose Pallais expressed his concern that Ortega's "politically motivated" decisions would damage the independence and professionalism of the NNP.

Comment

14. (C) Comment: Ortega's statement and subsequent actions reflect his desire to regress both the NNP and the Nicaraguan Army back into completely subsidiary organs of the Sandinista Party, as they once were during the days of the Sandinista Revolution. The continued institutional independence and professionalism of the NNP and the Nicaraguan Army has been one of the few bright spots remaining under Ortega's increasingly authoritarian regime and the foundation of our

strongest remaining areas of cooperation with the current administration. Should Ortega's remarks result in the actual, official removal of the Ministry of Government from the NNP management structure, such a development could have deleterious effects on Post's ability to carry out continued counternarcotics support for NNP units and operations. In fact, this has already occurred, as one of the dismissed NNP officials, former Juvenile Affairs Chief Hamyn Gurdian, was one of the Embassy's strongest partners on narcotics demand reduction programs. Post will continue to seek clarification regarding Ortega's statements with GON officials. End

Comment.
TRIVELLI